Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A device for contactless optical acquisition of biometric characteristics of a body part, the device comprising:

a) a housing;

b) an acquisition chamber disposed in said housing;

c) an object plane extending approximately horizontally in said acquisition chamber;

d) a positioning assistance device which generates directions to assist in positioning of a surface of the body part to be imaged in said object plane; and

e) at least one camera which acquires a surface image of the body part from one direction, wherein said at least one camera comprises:

i) a lens system which provides substantially distortion-free imaging in an entire image field and has a depth of field corresponding to at least a maximum topographic extension of the surface of the body part to be imaged; and

ii) an image sensor;

said at least one camera acquiring a plurality of shots of a surface image at different exposures, said plurality of shots of a surface image at different exposures being acquired and evaluated together.

Claim 2 (original): The device according to claim 1, wherein said lens system has a depth of field corresponding to deviations in a position of the surface of the body part to be imaged from an ideal position.

Claim 3 (original): The device according to claim 1, wherein a ratio of object width to focal length is greater than 10.

Claim 4 (original): The device according to claim 1, further comprising at least one deviation mirror disposed in a beam path between said lens system and said object plane.

Claim 5 (original): The device according to claim 1, further comprising at least one deviation prism disposed in a beam path between said lens system and said object plane.

Claim 6 (original): The device according to claim 1, wherein the biometric characteristics of a body part are acquired from one side or from a plurality of sides.

Claim 7 (original): The device according to claim 1, wherein said at least one camera acquires a plurality of images of the body part from a plurality of sides and wherein said plurality of images are evaluated individually or in combination.

Claim 8 (original): The device according to claim 1, wherein said positioning assistance device comprises a light source which emits a light beam in a visible spectrum.

Claim 9 (original): The device according to claim 8, wherein said light source is switched off during exposure.

Claim 10 (original): The device according to claim 1, wherein said positioning assistance device comprises a sensor for determining an object plane of the body part and an output device which provides instructions to assist in positioning the body part in a desired object plane.

Claim 11 (original): The device according to claim 10, wherein said sensor comprises a photoelectric barrier array.

Claim 12 (original): The device according to claim 11, wherein said photoelectric barrier array emits light in an invisible spectrum.

Claim 13 (original): The device according to claim 10, wherein said sensor comprises a distance sensor which operates on a capacitive, high-frequency or ultrasound basis.

Claim 14 (original): The device according to claim 10, wherein said output device comprises an optical or acoustic display device.

Claim 15 (original): The device according to claim 1, wherein said at least one camera acquires a plurality of shots of a surface image and wherein one or more of said plurality of shots having a desired quality are evaluated.

Claim 16 (canceled).

Claim 17 (original): The device according to claim 1, further comprising an illuminator device which illuminates a surface of the body part to be imaged.

Claim 18 (original): The device according to claim 17, wherein said illuminator device comprises a light emitting diode arrangement.

Claim 19 (original): The device according to claim 17, wherein said illuminator device comprises at least one flash tube.

Claim 20 (original): The device according to claim 17, wherein an exposure can be controlled by regulating a duration of time during which said illuminator device lights.

Claim 21 (original): The device according to claim 17, wherein said illuminator device emits white light or monochrome light of one or more wavelengths selected from a visible or invisible spectrum.

Claim 22 (original): The device according to claim 21, wherein said illuminator device emits white light or monochrome light having a plurality of wavelengths and wherein a plurality of shots of a surface image are acquired.

Claim 23 (original): The device according to claim 1, further comprising an evaluation device which determines a biometric characteristic mathematically by using a computation algorithm, wherein a same computation algorithm can be applied to different surface images of a body part and a different computation algorithms can be applied to a same surface images of a body part.

Claim 24 (original): The device according to claim 23, wherein a computation algorithm which is applied during an initial acquisition of a surface image of a body part and which returns superior results is stored in a memory, and wherein said stored computation algorithm is applied preferentially during a subsequent acquisition of a same surface image of the body part.

Claim 25 (original): The device according to claim 1, further comprising a light source and a sensor which determine a light transmitting capacity or a reflection characteristic of the body part to be imaged as an additional biometric characteristic.

Claim 26 (original): The device according to claim 25, wherein said light source emits pulsed light or light of changing intensity and wherein said sensors are triggered by pulsed light or light of changing intensity and wherein said sensors generate signals which are evaluated.

Claim 27 (original): The device according to claim 25, wherein said additional biometric characteristic is stored together with a biometric characteristic obtained by evaluating an acquired surface image of the body part.

Claim 28 (original): The device according to claim 27, wherein a stored additional biometric characteristic is compared to a measured additional biometric characteristic to detect manipulation.

Claim 29 (original): The device according to claim 27, wherein a measured biometric characteristic is compared to a stored biometric characteristic acquired on the basis of a surface image of the body part at a different light wavelength to detect manipulation.